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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [EFIN](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: BRAINSTORMING WITH MARWAN AND NAYLA: HAVE KOFI
BRING NICOLAS MICHEL WITH HIM

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[¶1.](#) (S/NF) Meeting together with the Ambassador on 8/20, Marwan Hamadeh and Nayla Mouawad urged that Kofi Annan bring UN/OLA chief Nicolas Michel with him when the UNSYG travels to Beirut next week. Having Michel in town to finalize the draft on the Hariri tribunal will put the right spin on Annan's visit, they argued, and keep Syria off balance. Pointing to a petition by the March 14 majority for a special parliamentary session, they said that such a session could be used to approve the Hariri tribunal, examine Bank al-Medina files, and find other ways to seize the initiative from Hezbollah and the pro-Syrians. While admitting that the GOL must do better on reconstruction, they said that Hezbollah's big advantage is its ability to hand out cash, which the GOL cannot and should not do. They hoped that the USG would press the Gulf Arabs, however, to pass some cash to March 14 politicians to use on local patronage to compete with Hezbollah. No one, they said, will remember who built a bridge, but people will remember who gave them cash. After Mouawad left, Hamadeh also said that the Lebanese police was interrogating a Syrian businessman who seemed to have been tasked with discrediting UNIIIC Commissioner Serge Brammertz. End summary.

PLEASE, GET THE ARABS
TO GIVE US CASH FOR HAND-OUTS

[¶2.](#) (S/NF) On 8/20, the Ambassador met with Minister of Telecommunications Marwan Hamadeh and Minister of Social Affairs Nayla Mouawad. While the purpose of the meeting was for the Ambassador to press them to help on UNSCR 1701-related issues (a subject on which the two ministers agreed), the meeting quickly became a brainstorming session about how the March 14 movement can retake the political initiative away from Hezbollah and Hassan Nasrallah. Given Lebanon's traditional patronage politics, Hamadeh and Mouawad were most concerned about getting money in the hands of March 14 political leaders to spend on relief and reconstruction -- not at the expense of GOL and international donor efforts, they said, but as something additional that people will remember. Hamadeh noted that he and Druse leader Walid Jumblatt would travel to Saudi Arabia this week, and he hoped the U.S. would put in a good word with the Saudis to "give Walid three or four million dollars" to keep the Druse on the side of March 14.

CALLING FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY
PARLIAMENTARY SESSION

[¶3.](#) (C/NF) The Ambassador commented that it seemed strange, when two-thirds of Lebanon did not share Hezbollah's vision for the country, that the March 14 forces could not retake the initiative even without cash. Claiming to be trying, Mouawad and Hamadeh showed the Ambassador a parliamentary petition being circulated among the 71 March 14 parliamentarians, asking President Emile Lahoud to request Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to open an extraordinary session of parliament. It is a "scandal" that Lebanon went through a war and the parliament maintained its summer recess (until the third week of September), Mouawad noted. They predicted that Berri would have no choice but to open the extraordinary session, and the March 14 MPs will use the extraordinary session "to make the pro-Syrians uncomfortable," Hamadeh said.

HARIRI TRIBUNAL: GET KOFI
TO BRING NICOLAS MICHEL WITH HIM

[¶4.](#) (S/NF) The Ambassador noted the USG interest in moving ahead quickly on establishing the "special tribunal with international character" to try suspects in the Rafiq Hariri murder case or those related to the Hariri murder. Hamadeh and Mouawad agreed. Our impression, the Ambassador said, was that action now rests with the Lebanese to respond to the UN/OLA draft agreement on the tribunal. After conferring with Minister of Justice Charles Rizk by phone, Hamadeh responded that the Lebanese are ready to receive Nicolas Michel (from UN/OLA) to work out the final details, at which

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point the cabinet majority and parliamentary majority (in the anticipated extraordinary session) can approve the tribunal. The Ambassador asked whether the March 14 majority was ready to confront a cabinet walk-out by the Hezbollah ministers over the tribunal question. After all, the Ambassador noted, the Hezbollahis seem to be using "sovereignty" as the excuse for foot-dragging over UNSCR 1701 implementation, and they can claim that the tribunal, too, is an infringement on Lebanon's supposedly sacred sovereignty. Mouawad and Hamadeh

both agreed that the cabinet majority would force the issue.

¶5. (S/NF) Hamadeh said that it was important to get Nicolas Michel to Beirut "immediately," to put the resurgent Syrians off-balance "and make them think twice about killing any of us." Thinking outloud, Hamadeh then said, "Have Kofi (Annan) bring him with him." His idea coming together as he spoke, Hamadeh said that the problem with the UNSYG's visit a week hence revolves around the visuals. Annan will obliged to meet President Emile Lahoud. Annan will go to Damascus. Annan will smile and say happy things to the cameras. "He won't be as tough as he should." But if Annan brings Michel with him "and leaves him in Beirut to put the final touches on the tribunal agreement while Kofi goes to see Bashar" will leave an entirely different impression. "Brilliant!" Nayla shouted, slapping Marwan's hand; "tu a raison!" Hamadeh and Mouawad also argued that it is important that Annan try to project as sober message as possible about Iran and Syria's role in arms smuggling, with the public message starting even before the UNSYG departs for the region.

BANK AL-MEDINA AND OIL-FOR-FOOD:
WAYS TO BRING DOWN LAHOUD?

¶6. (S/NF) Mouawad and Hamadeh raised the familiar subject of ridding the country of Emile Lahoud. They had no original ideas but suggested (as each has independently) that the notorious Bank al-Medina files be opened up and the Oil-for-Food scandal be mined for dirt on Lahoud. Mouawad tried to put the USG in the lead on the Bank al-Medina files, saying that we should use the excuse of money-laundering and terrorist financing to ask the GOL for the files. The Ambassador said that the USG had no good reason to ask now for Bank al-Medina files, and this seemed to be another example of the Lebanese trying to shift responsibility to foreigners. And once the Lebanese succeed in shifting responsibility for something unpleasant to foreigners, they then don't want to listen to what the foreigners say. Hamadeh agreed and said that the March 14 majority should consider whether the extraordinary parliamentary session they hoped to hold could have committed hearings on Bank al-Medina. Some March 14 politicians, however, may be caught up in the widespread scandal themselves, he cautioned.

¶7. (S/NF) As for Oil-for-Food, Mouawad and Hamadeh thought that this was a promising area to examine. But Hamadeh claimed that trying to go through Oil-for-Food reports looking for connections to Emile Lahoud is a full-time job. The Ambassador commented that surely Saad Hariri could pay a full-time researcher. Hamadeh responded that "it would be better if you did it, quietly. You have all sorts of reasons to be able to look at the UN files. We don't. You have people who know how to use those files, because they've been working with them already."

TELECOM SERVICES RESTORED,
THANKS TO CENTRAL AUTHORITIES

¶8. (S/NF) As for other ideas to put the pro-Syrians in Lebanon off-balance, they both pressed on providing, quickly, equipment and ammunition for both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces (national police). The Ambassador added that it was important for the GOL to get its own act together on reconstruction priorities and coordination, which they agreed has been handled poorly. Hamadeh noted that, as of that morning, phone service had been restored to all parts of the south except Jezzine, all because of his ministry's work. This, he said, will be publicized widely.

AND THE NEED FOR CASH ARISES AGAIN

¶9. (S/NF) But speaking of reconstruction opened the subject
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of money again, with both of them arguing that the Lebanese will remember who handed out cash, not who built bridges. "We are whores in that way," Marwan said, shaking his head. Since the U.S. and European governments cannot dispense with accountability, perhaps the Gulf Arabs could be asked to help, they said, turning the conversation back to where it began. After all, Hamadeh said, the Gulf Arabs are both furious and frightened by the speeched of Bashar al-Assad and Hassan Nasrallah. "We can worry about reform and accounting later," Marwan said; "we are fighting a war for our existence, and the enemy's best weapon is cash. We have to move both cash and projects, but cash now can move more quickly."

SARG (ALLEGEDLY) SENDS AGENT
TO DISCREDIT BRAMMERTZ EFFORTS

¶10. (S/NF) Raising a different subject after Mouawad left to meet with UN envoys Terje Roed-Larsen and Vijay Nambiar, Hamadeh said that the ISF had two days earlier arrested a Syrian who admitted being sent to Beirut by the SARG. While the details were still emerging from the ongoing ISF investigation, XXXXXXXXXXXX cited former Syrian VP Abdulhalim Khaddam's name in asking to see Hamadeh to hand over some important documents. Suspicious, Hamadeh got a message to Khaddam, who said that XXXXXXXXXX is XXXXXXXXXX representative in Damascus but also connected to Syrian military intelligence. When XXXXXXXXXX arrived for the appointment with Hamadeh, he was arrested and subsequently admitted ("under vigorous interrogation," Hamadeh said) to carrying false documents related to the Hariri assassination.

¶11. (S/NF) Hamadeh said that he assumed XXXXXXXXXXXX was trying to lure UNIIC Commissioner Brammertz on a wild goose chase in the hopes of embarrassing Brammertz in the same way that the witness Zuhair Saddiq had discredited part of Detlev Mehlis' work. One of the more interesting tidbits out of the XXXXXXXXXXXX investigation, Hamadeh said, was the revelation that an XXXXXXXXXXXX store adjacent to XXXXXXXXXXXX is owned by the same family. Hamadeh guessed that the electronics store is probably a front for

COMMENT

¶12. (S/NF) Mouawad and Hamadeh are two of the more zealous and vocal members of the March 14 majority, and neither are prone to flinching. They are also used to playing in

traditional Lebanese politics, which explains why concerns with cash loom so large in their minds. Frankly, it seems to us to be a reasonable investment (assuming someone comes forward), if a couple of million dollars helps Walid Jumblatt maintain the Druse on the March 14 side rather than see them start to shift toward the pro-Syrian Druse leader Talal Arslan. But what we liked best from this meeting was the suggestion that Kofi Annan bring Nicolas Michel with him to Beirut: Annan may be presenting his visit as part of UNSCR 1701 implementation, but Michel's presence would remind everyone -- including in Damascus -- that the recent fighting has not distracted us from the need to bring Rafiq Hariri's killers to justice.

FELTMAN